

Phyllis Fay Covey

July 11, 2023



Phyllis was born in Smith River, CA to Alice Billy and Edward 'Gobel' Richards Jr. She had 7 siblings. She was 91 years old when she passed peacefully at home. She is Tolowa, Tututni, and citizen of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians located in Oregon.

Phyllis lost her mother at the age of fourteen and dropped out of school to help raise her siblings. Her father Gobel and his children also cared for two sets of grandparents. She married Raymond Criteser and they had four children together (David, Rayona, Dawn, and Janelle). They enjoyed taking their children to Giants games, attending community events, and spending time with their very large family.

Later in life, she chose to go back to school and graduated from Del Norte High School in 1973, her youngest daughter was a freshman at the time. She enjoyed working for the school district for eight years. Phyllis worked at several local schools as a recess playground monitor, teacher assistant, and finally computer operator in the payroll department. She also once served her community as an elected Tribal Council member for the Smith River Rancheria. On October 1, 1977, she married Michael Covey, he had two daughters, Jeri and Julie.

Phyllis had an infectious smile and enjoyed life with her cheerful soul. She took great pride in all her children and grandchildren embracing and living their culture. She enjoyed attending gatherings and making her annual trip to Siletz, OR to attend the Pow Wow. Phyllis enjoyed spending her time with family, reading, watching her favorite tv shows, and playing bingo. She enjoyed many traditional foods and was always delighted when her grandchildren and nephews would bring her gifts from their hunting and gathering trips. She was the matriarch of a very large family. She had 4 children, 2 stepdaughters, 17 grandchildren, 21 great-grandchildren, and 17 great-great-grandchildren. A total of 55 grandchildren. She leaves behind so many loved ones and will be missed dearly by all those who knew her.

She resided in her home in Smith River on the reservation until her passing. Phyllis was preceded in death by her parents, her husband Michael Covey, her children David Criteser and Rayona Zosel, her son-in-law Earl Brown, her sister Thelma Whipple, and her brothers Calvin, Edwin, Allen, and Murray.

Phyllis leaves behind her children Dawn Brown (Dennis), Janelle Brown, Jeri Throop (Robert), and Julie Coney (Lamont). She is also survived by her siblings William 'Bill' Richards and Florene Travis. She loved all her grandchildren, nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

A private family viewing was held. Graveside services will be held at the Howonquet Cemetery in Smith River on Monday, July 17, 2023, at 3 pm. A potluck will immediately follow at the Howonquet Hall Community Center.